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Powers Glows At Neighbors' Warm Greeting

BIG STONE GAP, Va. (AP) — U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers was the center of a warm reception today in his first face-to-face meeting with his southwest Virginia neighbors since his release from a Russian prison.

"It's almost impossible to tell how I feel," the 32-year-old pilot commented on his reception.

"They all seemed happy to see me and, believe me, I'm very glad to be back."

He met with old friends in a small cafe in Norton prior to a more formal homecoming ceremony later in the day at an armory here.

OLD ACCENT

Powers, his hair tinged with gray, told a newsmen, "It sure is nice to hear a Virginia accent again."

Flashing a pleasant smile for all, Power said he was "just now getting the brunt of the public eye . . . I had been away from it for several days."

The mountain folk greeted the man in the simply cut Ivy League suit with, "Congratulations, Francis" or "We're glad you're back."

His plans to buy a new suit went awry because of the crowd that gathered to see him, most for the first time.

Powers said he would spend a few days in the area with his parents and five sisters.

SHORT SLEEP

Powers arrived early yesterday at nearby Pound, after a drive from Washington. He spent the rest of the morning chatting with his family, got two hours sleep and was up again.

After a home-cooked turkey dinner last night, Powers said "there are no words to describe" his feeling at revisiting his home. He said it was the first time he and his five sisters had been together since 1933.

His wife, Mrs. Barbara Powers, was not on hand for the homecoming.